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ABSTRACT

This study interviewed 45 ninth-grade teachers in 4 secondary schools in Ontario, Canada, in the spring of 1997 regarding their perceptions of their professional learning needs. Respondents were part of a 3-year research and development study, "Change Frames." Analysis is based on the view that the most meaningful teacher professional development takes place not in a workshop or in discrete, bounded conversations, but in the context of professional communities, discourse communities, and learning communities. Teachers typically belong to multiple professional communities, each of which functions somewhat differently as a strategic site for professional growth. Thus, it is argued, professional growth is, at root, about enabling professional community. Both case studies and a cross-case analysis were carried out. Findings indicate that teachers valued professional development that was directly relevant to their practice. However, many teachers tended to look to experts outside their workplace to fill this need, often with disappointing results. Findings suggest that the transmission model of professional development is often incongruent with adult learning principles and antithetical to building the conditions of shared purpose, infrastructure, and domains for action that enable schools to become effective learning organizations. (Contains 101 references.) (Author/SM)

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The Professional Learning Needs and Perceptions of Secondary School Teachers: Implications for Professional Learning Community

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Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association
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The Professional Learning Needs and Perceptions of Secondary School Teachers: Implications for Professional Learning Community

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Abstract

This paper is based on interviews with 45 grade 9 teachers in four secondary schools in Ontario, Canada in the spring of 1997 who participated in a three-year research and development study, called "Change Frames". Analysis is based on the view that teachers' professional development of the most meaningful sort takes place not in a workshop or in discrete, bounded conversations, but in the context of professional communities, discourse communities, learning communities. Teachers typically belong to multiple professional communities, each of which functions some what differently as a strategic sight for professional growth. Thus, it is argued, professional growth is, at root, about enabling professional community. Both case studies and a cross-case analyses were carried out. Findings indicate that teachers valued professional development that was directly relevant to their practice. However, many teachers tended to look to 'experts' outside their workplace to fill this need - often with disappointing results. Educators seem to have a tenacious belief in the transmission model of professional development. Yet, findings from these data suggest that this approach is often incongruent with adult learning principles and antithetical to building the conditions of shared purpose, infrastructure and domains for action that enable schools to become effective learning organizations. What's needed is for teachers to be able to reconceptualize their professional learning so that their own practical knowledge and understanding become the *entry points* for their inquiry, dialogue, and reflection. 101 references.

Introduction

This paper is based on interviews with teachers in the spring of 1997 who participated in a three-year research and development study called, "Change Frames". At that time, the provincial government was planning to introduce Secondary School Reform which would require secondary schools to implement a new curriculum, incorporate new assessment, evaluation and reporting procedures to parents, restructure departments, and increase classroom instructional time while simultaneously reducing preparation and professional development time. Given the very short implementation timelines and the just in time delivery strategy of the government, teachers' experienced great difficulty in preparing and integrating all the changes into their practice. This led to considerable labour unrest and eventually an illegal strike in the fall of 1997. The teachers' union claimed that the government's reforms were based on political expediency, rather than concern for students or quality education. The strike left a legacy of distrust, anger and bitterness among teachers and negative publicity has adversely affected their sense of professionalism. Time for teachers' professional development and work with colleagues was reduced just when learning new knowledge and skills was essential. This added to teachers' anxieties and frustration.

The Concept of Change Frames

Our study was organized conceptually around seven 'frames': purpose, politics, culture, structure, leadership, organizational and professional learning, and emotion. The notion of frames has been formulated differently (Goffman, 1975; Bolman and Deal, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1984). In essence, framing allows us to view and interpret phenomena through different conceptual lenses. Analysis in this paper focused on data we collected in the organizational and professional learning frame, which is concerned with how teachers and others learn to manage the particular changes that are being implemented as well as about how to cope with and initiate change on a positive, ongoing basis. Professional learning deals with how well teachers can develop the necessary knowledge and skills in order to improve their classroom practice and adapt to innovations such as new curriculum

and pedagogy. Professional learning may be individual and personal or collegial, when professional communities develop knowledge and expertise that can easily be shared and disseminated in the pursuit of continuous improvement (Senge, 1990; Lieberman, 1996). Organizational learning refers to the process of "improving actions through better knowledge and understanding"(Fiol and Lyles, 1985) and thus requires both collective knowledge building and behaviour. There is no question that the secondary school reforms envisioned by the government in Ontario will require significant organizational learning.

Our Argument

We will argue that teachers 'craft' knowledge and practical understandings concerning their students' learning and their own classroom practice is an underrated and underused resource for teachers' professional learning and building school capacity for change. Even though they yearn for more practicality in their professional learning, teachers generally do not see themselves as 'experts' in their own professional development, nor do they conceive of their classrooms as 'laboratories' for their own as well as their students' learning. Furthermore we will argue that even though the teachers in our study value opportunities for professional learning and opportunities to share ideas with colleagues, the lack of a cohesive implementation design and action with respect to curriculum and pedagogy leaves professional and organizational learning in the hands of the individual and subject to the influence of past professional learning experiences.

Basis for Our Argument

Data in our study clearly show that most secondary teachers conceive of professional learning as largely dependent on their own individual initiative to upgrade their knowledge, skills and understanding from 'experts'. Thus, most teachers refer to opportunities outside their school setting such as workshops, seminars, conferences, inspirational speakers, and academic courses as common forms of their professional learning. 'Experts' can and are 'imported' into the school, as

well. The point, however, is the emphasis that teachers place on the conceptual knowledge of 'experts' as more important than their own practical craft knowledge as the basis for their professional learning. It is not the case that 'experts' do not have valuable knowledge that can help teachers examine their practice, stimulate their thinking and motivate them to implement new instructional models. The point is that our analysis suggests a serious lack of balance between the theoretical knowledge of 'experts' and teachers' practical, craft knowledge as the basis for meaningful professional learning. In this regard, teacher data are more revealing for what is missing than what is explicit. That is, our data indicate very little evidence of any school-wide planning around curriculum, teaching and learning within a school-based context where teachers regularly share their craft knowledge, practical experiences, and collaborate around curriculum issues in relation to their teaching practice.

Methodology

Data for this analysis were gathered from a representative sample of 45 teachers across four urban secondary schools. Teachers were selected to be representative, on the basis of age, years of teaching, subject, grades taught, classroom teacher or department head, and membership on key schools committees (such as School Success Team, Professional Development Committee, and Change Frames Team). We used a semi-structured interview format of approximately one hour and tape recorded our interviews for transcription. Questions were organized around the seven change frames. We were interested in teachers' understanding and use of change frames in relation to particular change initiatives in which their schools were engaged. In this paper, we focus our analysis specifically on the *organizational and professional learning frame*. We organized teachers' narratives about their professional development thematically and conceptually, using an inductive, 'grounded theory' approach (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Magnotto, 1996). We also compare teacher data across the four school sites. School pseudonyms were used.[1]

[1]The Change Frames Study is longitudinal.Follow-up focus groups of administrators, Heads and teachers separately were conducted in the fall of 1999. A Change Frames report for the first three years will contain a comparative analysis of staff experience of school change over time, based on interview and focus group data.

Review of the Literature

Over the past several decades both the public and at least some educational officials have been vocal in their demands for new programs and practices in education. Essentially, school development in the past 20 years has been influenced by three waves of educational reform (Holly, 1990). The first wave, school effectiveness, attempted to identify a set of characteristics for schools that were seen as effective and to transfer these characteristics to other schools (Mortimore et al, 1988). A second wave of reform was based on the school improvement literature (Hopkins et al, 1994; Fullan, 1991). It built on lessons learned from failed change efforts of the 1970s, such as the futility of top down mandates and the inadequacies of isolated innovations (Mclauglin, 1991), in order to provide an approach to change that focused on the individual school as the centre for change. Frustrated by the pace of change, reformers in many jurisdictions have adopted a third and often overtly political approach to change - system wide reform. This approach is based on the premise that changes in education can be initiated and accelerated through alterations in school structures and the centralized prescription of detailed curriculum targets, assessment requirements and even required pedagogy (Goodson, 1994: Fullan, 2000). The literature suggests, however, that government initiated restructuring efforts elsewhere have made little impact on the teaching learning process (Cohen, 1995, Elmore, 1995; 1990).

Increasingly researchers have suggested that restructuring must be linked to re-culturing a process of envisioning new beliefs, values and norms, designing new instructional models, and re-conceptualizing teachers practice and roles (Hannay and Ross, 1997; Hargreaves, 1994). It is within this latter context that this study has taken place. Not all efforts to improve schools and school districts have been successful (Elmore, 1998), in part because while educational systems rely on

external developed policies and mandates to assure public accountability, these same directives can constrain teacher decision making and professionalism (Darling-Hammond, 1993). In addition, conceptualizations and models of teacher development are often weak, or entirely lacking thus diminishing the necessary opportunities for teacher development (Fullan, 1995).

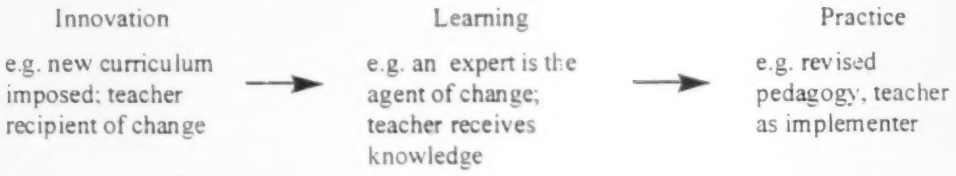
Professional Learning

In Ontario, schools and school districts rely on relatively formal models of professional learning. Typically, the school district, in supporting an innovation related to its own purposes or that of the provincial government, invites schools to send one or more teachers to workshops, where consultants or exemplary teachers discuss and perhaps demonstrate innovative ideas. Other professional development opportunities come through the form of Additional Qualification courses or personal study opportunities at a nearby university. Most schools in Ontario have a professional development committee who is responsible for planning professional learning opportunities for their colleagues. Activities often take place during staff meetings in the form of guest speakers, for example, a school district consultant presenting a short workshop. Thus, professional learning experienced by teachers typically takes place outside the workplace context focusing mainly on mandated innovations, theoretical and conceptual knowledge, involving the use of an "outside expert". These events tend to be isolated and infrequent providing little opportunity for follow up in the context of the participants' workplace (schools and classrooms). Models such as these were studied in depth in Ontario some 20 years ago by Fullan (1991) who found they failed to:

- respond to the adult learning needs of the participants
- adapt to the particular practical needs and experience of the participants
- build in adequate follow up support for ideas and practices introduced in the in-service programs
- provide any conceptual basis in their planning and delivery.

Interestingly, in the transmission oriented models described above, the pre-occupation is with the innovation itself or the knowledge, (theoretical and conceptual) which underpins them. In examining this phenomenon, it is helpful to distinguish between Learning/Knowledge, Work/Practice and Innovation, and the relationship among these three elements. Learning/Knowledge is generally viewed and experienced by teachers as distinct from work, often presented by "experts", and likely to be abstract in nature. Work/Practice is generally viewed as conservative and resistant to change. Innovation is often imposed and is frequently viewed as a disruptive, but necessary, imposition of change on the other two (Brown and Duguid, 1996).

Traditional models of professional development typically attend to the learning required to understand and implement the innovation, assuming that change in practice will follow. (Brown and Duguid (1996) illustrate this process:


Innovation
e.g. new curriculum imposed; teacher recipient of change
Learning
e.g. an expert is the agent of change; teacher receives knowledge
Practice
e.g. revised pedagogy, teacher as implementer

Brown and Duguid argue that successful models of professional learning orientate quite differently.

The model they document, albeit one from outside education, *starts* with practice not innovation or knowledge. Participants inquire and gather data, reflect, talk together and act. They design processes that are engaging and that have strong purpose and in doing so create a learning culture that can sustain itself. Such inquiring cultures develop particular norms and values and particular structures that enable the participants to use their work experience as the basis for their learning. Examples of this are relatively few and far between. However in her case studies of high schools, McLaughlin (1994) found that some schools differed fundamentally in how they defined professional development. Her research demonstrates that successful professional development permeates the culture of the school.

Our analysis is based on the view that teachers' professional development of the most meaningful sort takes place not in a workshop or in discrete, bounded conversations, but in the context of professional communities, discourse communities, learning communities. Further, we show that teachers can, and typically do, belong to multiple professional communities, each of which functions some what differently as a strategic sight for professional growth. Thus, it is argued, professional growth is, at root, about enabling professional community (McLaughlin, 1994, p.31).

If there is diversity in how teachers conceive of, value and experience professional learning then perhaps that has to do with how teachers themselves view their teaching. For instance Huberman (1993) envisions the teacher as creating or repairing learning activities of different kinds with a distinctive style or 'signature'. He or she adapts, on the spot, the instructional materials bought, given, or scavenged, as a function of the time of day, the degree of pupil attentiveness, the peculiar skill deficiency emerging in the course of the activity and the unexpected breakthrough in pupil understanding etc. In doing this the teachers relies heavily on *concrete bits of practice* that have proved successful in the past but that must be reconfigured as a function of the specific situation in the classroom, in order to make them work. This image of the teaching process as an essentially idiosyncratic, pragmatic and conceptualized activity raises interesting questions about teachers' professional learning. For instance, how and to what extent are teachers able to share their craft knowledge if it is indeed so indigenous and individualualistic? Are there problems of finding a common language to explain ones practice to a colleague? Do teachers' understanding or conceptualization of what constitutes successful professional development enhance or constrain their professional learning?

Organizational Learning

Change Frames takes not only the perspective of how the individual learns professionally, but how the organization learns as well. Organizational learning, as a model for school reform, suggests that staff working within a school setting, share a common social understanding related to the purposes of their work. In an organizational context, however, learning is more than an individual response. It is focused on school-wide goals and collective efforts in gathering and acting on information about performance (Seashore Louise and Kruse 1998). Typically, schools are not very effective as learning organizations (Fulani, 1993). Commitments to professional development are often limited, individualized and episodic (Little, 1994). Professional cultures or communities are often underdeveloped (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1993; Louis & Kruse, 1995). Reform strategies tend to be organized around compliance and control, rather than development and capacity building.

Time for reflection is woefully restricted and becoming even more limited still (Hargraves, 1994). All of these factors hinder not only opportunities for professional learning but also the facility of the organization to build capacity and adapt.

Senge, (1996) identifies three conditions that successful learning organizations require:

- the development of guiding ideas
- an infrastructure for learning
- domains for taking action.

It is useful, then, to consider how and to what extent schools professional learning is guided by shared ideas and a common purpose? Implicit here is leadership that is knowledgeable and consistent in involving colleagues in the important work of the school. How and to what extent there is an infrastructure for learning? Included here would be the necessary time, procedures to gather information and nurture a culture and discourse of collaboration. Finally, all this learning without the implied action, does not make a learning organization. Therefore how and to what extent actions made by the organization are informed by collegial professional learning is of significant consequence to the learning organization.

The discussion above leads us back to the present context in education. Secondary School Reform is mandating new curriculum for all subjects, standards, assessment evaluation and reporting procedures, while, simultaneously, diminishing time for class preparation and professional learning. These processes are changing the context for education in the schools of Ontario in complex and perhaps unpredictable ways. Within this context, we have become curious as to how teachers conceive of and experience professional learning? How and to what extent schools have become resources for teacher development and how and to what extent teachers value professional learning and see its relationship to successfully adapting to mandated reform? We are also curious about how and to what extent there is a common or disparate rhetoric that pervades the work of teachers in our schools as we think that this might well reflect the kind of professional learning and dialogue

that teachers have engaged in? Finally we are interested in how the school itself learns collectively to respond to the pressures of educational reform?

Analysis

In this paper, we examine and compare the four project schools in relation to teachers' responses to questions in the ***organizational and professional learning frame***. In the interview, we asked about opportunities for teachers to gather information, examine and reflect on their practice; the extent of cross-department and cross-grade discussion; teachers' learning from colleagues; professional development that teachers found most valuable; and areas where teachers felt that more professional development was needed. We, along with our colleagues, completed separate change frames analyses for the particular school where we had conducted the teacher interviews (Retallic & Schmidt, 1999; Fink, 1999; Moore, 1999; and Hargreaves, 1999.

Mountain View

Mountain View Secondary School is unique among the project schools in terms of its purpose and student body. It is an 11 year old vocational school with 541 students (436 White; 75 African American; 30 Asian). The student population - drawn from a wide geographical area - has shifted from half 'Basic' curriculum and half 'General' to primarily Special Basic and Basic Level learners. Staff includes 53 teachers and seven teaching assistants (1 behavioural, 1 child care, and 5 orthopedic). Staff turnover is very high. Mountain View is the only vocational school in the district that has shown a steady increase in enrollment in the four years prior to our study.

The age ranges of teachers interviewed were 21-25 (1), 36-40 (2), 41-45 (3), 46-50 (1), 51-55 (4), 55-60 (1); their average experience was 16 years of service and their average tenure at the school was 6.2 years. Respondents represented teachers at all stages in their careers (Huberman, 1989). The sample half-female, half-male, included three department heads, one assistant

department head, and three members of the CFT. The following subject areas were represented: art/drama, science, math, special education, food, graphic communication, and guidance.

The school drew students from a wide geographical area. Turnover in staff was significant. Researchers who interviewed a representative sample of 12 teachers in Mountain View (Retallick & Schmidt, 1999) concluded that the staff faced a number of critical issues. First, there was a sense of crisis over school purpose, which many teachers felt was too generic for its special needs students. Second, teaching was emotionally and physically draining for teachers who reported being demoralized and working in "survival" mode. Third, teachers felt that class periods were too long (75 minutes) and the schedule too inflexible for their students. Fourth, tensions had surfaced around the use of space where teachers in similar subject areas, while sharing the same work area, experienced these arrangements as "forced collaboration". All of these factors combined to create a climate of "negativity" and "malaise".

The principal encouraged professional development, yet teachers reported few "formal opportunities" outside their departments. Time for reflection on practice (Schoenbach, 1994) occurred most often within departments where it was "dependent on how important the department head thinks that reflection is". For the most part, teachers "made (their) own opportunities" for professional learning, ended up "doing it (themselves)", and finding motivation for learning "from within rather than outside" (Malen, Murphy & Hart, 1988). Reflection was personal in one's own "time and physical space". Opportunities for discourse around teaching and learning between departments was largely "informal", however the school also had two separate preparation and planning rooms, where teachers from varied subject areas had their desks.

> ...We're all in the room together - history/geography/social science, and some of the technical subjects. Certainly we compare strategies, particularly we talk about...individual students...It tends to be restricted to that, because that is so imminent. Curriculum is a little more theoretical and more difficult to deal with when you've just got to go face so-and-so in your classroom.

Other changes worked against collaboration. The staff room had been "taken away" and replaced by a restaurant and hospitality department. Staff meetings and department meetings

offered little time for reflection on practice. Staff "retreats" were a thing of the past. For the most part, teacher dialogue centred on issues of students and student welfare - less around pedagogy:

> ...I don't think that there's much professional discussion about the craft of teaching, about teaching strategy and how to mold different strategies together to reach the outcome (English and Special Education).

One of the most significant forms of staff support in Mountain View concerned the adaptation of new teachers into what was portrayed as an emotionally demanding context for which few were prepared. Teachers spoke of how "distressing" it was to see students "verbally and physically abusing" one another. Others teachers confided getting "caught up in their own anger and frustration", struggling desperately to motivate "students with severe psychological problems":

> ...When I first came to this school, I felt really out of my league in terms of the kinds of problems that these kids have. I felt really inadequate to deal with them. My feeling was these guys need psychologists and social workers...probation officers, and police!...It's taken me 3 years here to be a good teacher.

In the face of such challenges, professional development was often perceived as having dubious value. Teacher-initiated collegial activities took up the slack. These included teacher-led workshops on computers, informal dialogue, team teaching (experienced teachers teamed with younger colleagues), sharing information from courses taken outside, and discussions in department meetings. Professional development areas that teachers found particularly valuable included "workshops dealing with administration", "portfolio assessment", "Academy of Reading program", computer training, and programs oriented to "changing students' behaviour". The least appealing professional development was "imposed" on people from different backgrounds "all doing exactly the same thing". Equally annoying for teachers was professional development slotted "in staff meetings at the end of the day" and speakers with "airy-fairy" ideas that bore no meaningful relationship to their students or their "idiosyncratic school". Teachers wanted more "continuous workshops on dealing with behaviour", and more professional development that related directly to

"the kind of problems these kids have". Finding time for professional development was an ever-present challenge:

> ...I tend to want (professional development) in my own time. I can't stand (imposed professional development). We can't take a lot of time off here because we're so small...It's so hard for teachers just to teach 3 classes here a day. Having the on-call[2] is a killer...You have to be here and see how you feel after a month. The last thing in the world you can do is go cover so someone can go off for a professional development session.

In summary, staff in Mountain View adopted an individualistic, self-reliant orientation to their professional development in an environment of severe time constraints, crisis management and decline of supportive structures and resources. It's hard to imagine collaborative inquiry and reflective dialogue taking root under such conditions. Yet, teachers found opportunities to support one another intellectually and emotionally and by sharing resources. Analysis suggests that some staff felt isolated from interaction with peers in other schools and from contacts with the community. Teachers' informal relationships can be very important. They can form the seeds from which can grow professional communities on a larger scale. In this school, however, unrelenting emotional demands and time pressures made it extremely difficult for teachers to move in the direction of a learning organization. Findings for Mountain View suggest that teachers were so preoccupied with just surviving that they had virtually no time to envision a whole school culture in which reflective inquiry around practice was the rule rather than the exception.

Talisman Park

Talisman Park Secondary School is an academic school that opened in 1920. Situated in an affluent, well-established neighbourhood, Talisman Park has approximately 1200 students and a

[2] Oncalls are when teachers are asked to teach a colleague's class due to absence. This can happen with little notice first thing in the morning. Lately, the pool of external supply teachers has been dwindling. This means more oncalls, lost prep time and higher stress.

staff of 75. Staff turnover is very low. Talisman Park is one of the few non-semestered schools in the board. Over 70% of its students are accepted into universities and colleges. Courses have been offered at both general and advanced levels. The school has a strong arts base - particularly in the areas of music, drama and visual arts. Ten percent of students are recent arrivals to Canada and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses are offered at all levels. Talisman Park has recently introduced 100 new computers for use in all programs. In recent years, the student body has started to become more diverse including visible minorities and immigrant children. The school has an active Parents' Council and produces a parent newsletter.

The average age of teachers interviewed was 46; their average experience was 23 years of service and their average tenure at the school was 13.6 years. Many respondents were late in their careers (Sikes, 1995; Huberman, 1989). Eight members of the sample were female and one represented a visible minority. The sample included two department heads and two members of the Change Frames Team. The following subject areas were represented: science, math, physics, music, counselling, French, English, film, family studies and library.

Teachers reported a rich array of formal and informal opportunities to gather information, examine and reflect on their practice including "presentations and workshops" inside and outside the school, small group discussions at "staff meetings", "networks of people", "learning from each other informally", visiting other schools, and the "coffee circle", which gathered regularly in the morning in the staff-room. However, professional dialogue occurred mostly within departments:

> ...You have to produce a professional growth plan...where you are going, (areas)...you need to improve, what you think you do well...And you're supposed to meet with your department head to go over your professional growth plan...If a department felt comfortable, they could actually share the information around the table, so to speak...(art teacher).

Other structures, such as the School Improvement Team, offered teachers an opportunity for involvement in whole school initiatives:

> ...The School Improvement Team is (something) that everybody can be on board with. There are so many aspects to it that everyone can find a niche. (Teachers) can find something to work on and to improve... (English teacher)

Although classroom visits offer intriguing possibilities for observing and sharing practice, this was perceived by one as an encroachment on one's professional right to privacy:

> ...An individual teacher's always welcome to go into someone's class to watch a lesson, how someone does something. However, after saying that, some teachers don't like to have a lot of (colleagues) in their class and watch...They're nervous, about doing something wrong...some teachers like working together, some teachers like working on their own (school counsellor).

Another commented that cross-department, cross-curricular discussions were limited to grade 9:

> ...Family studies, history and geography were working together for awhile. They would do integrated units...It's happened when they've done these groupings in the grade nines but it doesn't happen often with the grade tens onward (special education teacher).

Teachers said they valued professional development that was "connected" directly with their subject area, that applied to "things...immediate", that was "hands-on" and "practical". They wanted "something to take back to the classroom or school", and speakers who added to their "understanding of something new":

> ... the (professional development) I found useful are the hands-on type; you do it yourself. The one's that...spout out philosophy...talk talk talk, I've heard it a number of times. It's not helping me any. They don't give you enough meat and potatoes...(school counselor).

Teachers' learning priorities were oriented to practical purposes. Direct applications included "classroom discipline", "portfolio assessment" and "learning how to use a computer video

system". Across all disciplines, teachers looked for meaningful linkages between theory and practice.

Areas where teachers felt they needed more professional development included opportunities to "talk to industries...keep up with the times", how to "introduce students to our computer system", "conflict resolution", "how to deal with (special education) students", "more knowledge about computers" and "software", "administration and management", develop teaching skills", and "develop knowledge within the classroom".

In summary, finding time for learning independently as well as with colleagues was always a challenge. Some teachers resisted involvement in school-wide initiatives because of the time it meant away from their students. Nevertheless, teachers felt that their professional growth was encouraged by administration and that there were plenty of opportunities. Most teachers preferred self-chosen, practical, subject specific learning. Departments - especially math, science and English - were the main focus of professional development activity. Teachers in small, mixed specialty departments like music, art and family studies, described out-of-school opportunities as their first source for professional learning. Most teachers felt that informal contacts were also valuable for their growth. Evidence suggests that Talisman Park is individually and departmentally focused compared to the model of an organization that learns (Senge, 1990). Even though the principal was trying to develop the school as a learning community (Shaw, 1998), school-wide efforts were met with reluctance and attempts at interdisciplinary work beyond grade nine were only modestly successful (Gardner & Boix-Mansilla, 1994). Norms of teacher privacy, autonomy and isolation were hinted at but never fully articulated (Hord, 1997; Hargreaves, 1994; Lortie, 1975). Nevertheless, some collaborative activities were promising in relation to organizational learning (Seashore Louis & Leithwood, 1998) including grade 9 interdisciplinary programs, meetings that focused on student performance, and informal dialogue among colleagues concerned with special needs students. Contentment with the status quo was an important underlying theme.

North Ridge

North Ridge Secondary School is a culturally and racially diverse semestered school of over 1600 students and a staff of approximately 85. Staff turnover is comparatively low. The school as a strong academic tradition with courses offered at all levels and a rapidly growing the ESL program. North Ridge has formed some collaborative partnerships with local businesses, including Beak Environmental Consultants and the school's Earth Odyssey program. One of the school's highest priorities is the integration of computer technology into the curriculum. The school produces a newsletter and it has an active Parents' Council

The average age of teachers interviewed was 43; their average experience was 22.9 years of service and their average tenure at the school was 11.2 years. Staff turnover was low. Like Talisman Park, the pattern was for staff to come to the school put down professional roots. Six members of the sample were female. The sample included two department heads and two members of the CFT and one member of the School Success Team. The following subject areas were represented: English, science, co-op education, technical studies, special education, visual arts, library, counseling, and math. Staff expressed high commitment to their own professional growth:

> ...We had a wonderful chair of the professional development committee...(who) facilitated a number of opportunities for us to talk about teaching, evaluation, classroom practice during de-streaming...While we were working with de-streaming, we had a committee, the transitions committee. I was involved in that, we did lots of professional development...So there was lots of opportunity...There are so many facets, so many directions in which one can develop oneself professionally. One facet is curriculum, one facet is evaluation, one facet is personal interaction, and there's equity and sort of your own philosophical learning...There are changes in education that we are told are coming. No-one knows what they are going to be and we are uncomfortable.[3] So, there's been lots of opportunities, not necessarily about classroom practice (English teacher, 11 years at the school).

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[3] Specifics concerning reforms to all subjects in the curriculum were not available at the time of our interviews. Teachers were hard pressed to plan and develop new units without details about curriculum content, learning objectives, course outlines and assessment and reporting requirements. There was also a teacher advisor plan and community service component that had only been described in general policy statements.

Teachers cited workshops, conferences, seminars and department meetings as opportunities for professional dialogue. Most indicated that the focus for professional development was their department and that staff meetings were an inappropriate venue for collective dialogue and reflection:

> ...Staff aren't receptive at a staff meeting. (The principal) does bring in some good speakers. He does try to bring us up to date and keep us in touch with what's going on. So, professional development and growth are encouraged and promoted here. I would say that is a positive. Time to do it - and we're talking about the structure of the day - (staff meeting) is not always the best time... (Co-op Education teacher and member of the CFT and SST).

Many teachers said that they had experienced some form of cross-departmental communication. Transition Years initiatives created linkages between departments and teachers at the grade 9 level. A few teachers reflected on their experiences with collaborative structures of Transition Years reforms:

> ...Geography and science meet together, maybe business and English - especially with the transition years project. That (inter-departmental collaboration) was a positive outcome of transition years (Special Education).

> ...We had one exercise in the Transitions Years...where we created an anecdotal supplement to the report card that was to be common for all the departments...These were to be skills or abilities of the students that would show up in most classrooms. So, we had discussions across the departments about how to word this so that it reflected suitably skills that could be measured in each department...It was a qualified success... (Math teacher and CFT member).

Others cited a range of inter-departmental activities across disciplines that seemed at least partly consistent with earlier findings that some subjects integrate more easily than others (Hargreaves & Earl, 1997). Technological innovation seemed to be generating a demand for teacher dialogue, mentoring and collaborative problem-solving:

> ..In our department (Visual Arts) we're going to do some team teaching to solve a particular problem that's come up. Two of us are not very comfortable with a lot of computer programs...I think every department's talking about it. I think this school is extremely professional in their attitudes to teaching .

Whole school events also offered some opportunities to build professional community because they connected staff across departments and subject areas:

> ...I'm down here in the technical department an awful lot...Our staff does mix up very much. We do have...a very good Professional Development Committee here in the school that...for the last four years has been really successful in trying to encourage that. It's called our "Pedagogues Parlay", where everybody in the school gets involved at a lunch once a year talking about what they are doing in their specific areas....(English teacher).

There is an interesting paradox at work in this school. Teachers described a balkanized culture where departments function independently from and compete with one another for resources. At the same time, they cite a variety of cross-disciplinary activities. On closer inspection, most interdisciplinary activities occurred in grade 9 in connection with Transition Years reforms (Hargreaves, Earl, & Ryan, 1996).[4] Currently, implementing and upgrading staff skills in computer technology is high on this school's improvement agenda. Integration of computers into the curriculum and work culture in North Ridge offers the possibility of pushing the school further in the direction of a "professional learning community" (Seashore Louis & Leithwood, 1998). At this stage, sharing in the learning to use computers occurs mostly within departments. It remains to be seen whether computer technology will open up communication across subject areas, connect faculty across disciplines or end up reinforcing existing cultures of individualism and structures of subject hierarchy

[4] When a conservative government came to power in1995, the reforms were abandoned by the Ministry along with most of the school structures intended to support them. This has resulted in reversion back to traditional streaming and departmental organization.

How teachers manage when they run into difficulty is an important aspect of a school's learning culture. Do they work it out on their own? Do they seek and give help to colleagues? Most teachers in our study reported that their school's normative culture was one of collegial support:

> ...The thing I first noticed when I came to the school is that people are open about problems if they have one. I've been in schools where...you try and hide a problem because you don't want anyone to know that you've got one. But at this school, it's like 'What am I doing wrong here?' This is what's happening in my classroom, what can I do?' I think that's one of the strengths of the school. You don't feel stupid if you have a problem (English teacher and Librarian, 22 years at the school).

Just because a school is balkanized into departments (Hargreaves, 1994) doesn't mean that teachers' commitment to professional development and mutual support is weak. Collegial work within departments can be very intense. However, the balkanized environment limits collaborative learning possibilites across departments and in terms of whole school activities. Department hierarchies are not designed for cross-disciplinary innovation (e.g., classroom visits. teaching teams, and cross-curricula planning groups) as the ***expected norm.*** Most teachers described their colleagues as supportive, open and willing to exchange ideas and that such dialogue contributed to their insight, knowledge, and improvement.

Teachers wanted "opportunities to know more about the world for which we are preparing kids", "conflict resolution", "hands-on" computer training, and time to "sit down with colleagues...in other schools". However, professional development takes time. It competes with other responsibilities within the school day. Teachers were always "conscious of time", "time was of the essence", they didn't have "enough time" and they resented it being "wasted", especially because "time for collaboration and sharing" was so scarce. One particular point of tension for teachers was loss of control to determine the "best time" or the "right time" for their own professional learning and whether time for growth was something "provided" or "given" to them.

In summary, data suggest that continuous learning and professional development were core values held by both staff and administration at North Ridge. However, finding time for professional

growth could be frustrating. Teachers mentioned improving their own skill and knowledge base through individual initiative and collaborative arrangements, including a few references to team teaching. Some professional development activities were embedded in teachers' daily routines. For example, learning how to apply new computer technologies in administrative tasks, in classroom practice, and in the curriculum has become a top priority for staff. To date, teachers have improved their skills and knowledge by means of opportunities offered within their school, by the board, institutes of technology and by means of further coursework in education. Staff descriptions of their professional learning objectives, process and activities suggest a strong commitment to life-long learning on an individual level, but it had not been fully translated into a learning community model (Seashore Louis & Leithwood, 1998, Sergiovanni, 1998). Structural barriers to the development of a school-wide culture of strategic planning and continuous improvement persisted (Weller & Weller, 1997).

Stewart Heights

Stewart Heights Secondary School is an urban, semestered school of approximately 1500 students and a staff of 98. It has become more culturally diverse over the past six years due to an increase in multi-family dwellings and increased immigration from countries such as Hong Kong, India, and parts of the Caribbean. Two hundred students are bussed from neighboring communities, some of which are rural. Although a majority of the staff of 98 live in the surrounding community, it does not yet reflect the school's diverse student body. The school has one of the largest business/computer technology programs in the district and students are required to develop a "career portfolio" as early as grade 9. Stewart Heights is engaged in several partnerships with local businesses and universities. The school has an active Parents' Council.

The teacher sample consisted of 7 females and 3 males. Ages ranged as follows: 36-40 (1), 41-45 (1), 465-50 (1), 51-55 (7), with an average age around 50. Average experience was 19.9 years of service and their average tenure at the school was 8.5 years. The sample included four department heads and two members of the CFT, two members of the School Success Team and a

member of the professional development committee. Subject areas represented were library, family studies, English as a Second Language, business, physical and health education, special education, science, and accounting.

Teachers mentioned a variety of opportunities to gather information about, examine, and reflect on classroom practice including having a "professional library" where teachers can "access information", "professional development days", "staff meetings", school "board", "development of portfolios", "prep time", "informal sessions in the staffroom", invited speakers, "workshops", and "presentations". However, professional development that is "laid down from the top", where the "timing isn't necessarily the best", when teachers are "too busy" and there are limits on "money" for outside opportunities such conferences - all these conditions caused "disdain" in many staff. Many staff were cynical about *imposed* change and improvement initiatives:

> ...We don't do a lot of professional development...I guess it's how you define working together, learning together. I think a lot of the things we do, we do because we have to. We had to change our evaluation system (board and ministry directives)...So I think a lot of the professional growth comes about not because we want to grow as individuals, but because outside forces impose it upon us. Maybe it's because we are, as a group,...older than a lot of school staffs and, therefore, people had the idea, 'been there, done that. Didn't work fifteen years ago; Why would I do it again?' (librarian)

Hargreaves (1999), in his analysis of organizational and professional development in Stewart Heights concluded that, "with the exception of grade 9, the school lacked a (integrated) curriculum design that would bring teachers together beyond their customary assumptions and areas of expertise to discuss novel curriculum problems and opportunities in ways that create real dialogue about teaching and learning". Our analysis, and other studies, suggest that one way to overcome such barriers is to form dynamic interdisciplinary teams (Kruse & Seashore Louis, 1997; Friedman, 1997) which connect their work closely classroom practice. As well, in team settings, experienced staff have opportunities to give back what they've learned, share their knowledge, mentor younger colleagues and take leadership roles in staff development:

> ...I can only recall two (professional development days). One which I conducted - a seminar...I hope it was valuable to the participants. It was enjoyable for me...and I had time to sit undisturbed and work on some software for hours...and really get into a subject, follow through and have time (business teacher, 51-55, 8 years of teaching experience).

Discussion of teaching curriculum, student welfare and other matters across departments occurred "through department heads" but less on a formal than on an "informal" basis. Several mentioned the staff-room as a place for informal dialogue among teachers:

> ...Probably the best place is in the staff room...that is where we're talking about those individual students. We'll bring our books and our notes. We compare strategies for students. There's also a lot of opportunities...especially after school, where a number of us get together across curriculum. Grade nines is probably the best example; I teach a lot of the grade nine classes. I'll ask the history teacher for a time line of what the course curriculum is going to be. And same with the math...But for most of us - time is the biggest factor. When we get together, we'd like the kids to see that there is a relationship between classes across the courses (science teacher)..

Common staff space is important for informal teacher socialization and communication.[5] On the formal side, teachers from a variety of disciplines said that they benefited from "subject evaluation", "subject professional development", "seminars on software", "workshops specific to my own curriculum", "conferences", "sitting in on classes, and "talking to colleagues in other schools", "technology/computer symposiums", "workshops on specific topics, "career portfolio", and subject-specific issues". Practicality was the essential theme:

> ...I think we need to meet more with people who are involved in doing interesting (things) with curriculum...They can bring their experiences and show us other ways of teaching in concrete (terms), rather than philosophical (Library).

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[5] North Ridge had no general staffroom and many teachers said that this further isolated them from colleagues in other departments.

The issue of time was paramount in teachers' consciousness. They felt under pressure to find "more time", "take time" and "do one thing at a time". Outside forces diminished the amount of "time to sit undisturbed" and "follow through". It was difficult to "free up time", and "set aside time" to engage in professional learning in ways that were satisfying, relevant and meaningful.

In summary, Stewart Heights is a dynamic, multicultural environment. Teachers expressed a wide variety of professional learning interests and objectives. Self-determined, hands-on, practical, subject-relevant, and sustained learning experiences - often informal and collaborative in nature - were repeatedly emphasized as a priority. There is no indication in the data, however, that teachers reject formal training per se. Rather they are critical of "laid-on" events that are theoretically distant from their immediate teaching challenges, program priorities, and student needs. Teachers in two cases provided leadership in the form of in-school workshops and as a member of the school's professional development committee. Opportunities to learn informally with and from colleagues was particularly valued. Several mentioned the need to expand opportunities for dialogue with teachers in other schools. Computer literacy was cited frequently as a specific learning need. Interestingly, teachers did not explicitly identify their learning needs in relation to challenges and opportunities of a diverse student population - although they may have been implied in comments referring to "gaps in ability and knowledge to deliver program". There is a considerable body of critical research focusing on tensions and contradictions between traditional teaching assumptions and practices of teachers with dissimilar cultural and racial backgrounds to their students (Johns & Espinoza, 1996; Bell & Munn, 1996; Ryan, 1995; Delpit, 1993; Ogbu, 1982). As an older cohort, teachers brought years of experience and insight to their work (Huberman, 1989). Professional learning that is interactive and collegial was a consistently strong theme in the data. Individual motivation was perceived as essential for professional growth. In this regard, only one teacher, close to retirement, seemed passive about keeping current with their teaching practice by learning new knowledge and skills. Time for professional development during the regular school day was becoming more difficult, according to most teachers, and some specifically looked forward to time for learning away from the pressures of school, such as a "retreat" setting.

Cross-Case Analysis

Table I summarizes teachers' professional learning priorities across the four school sites. Data are arranged in descending order according to the number of project schools in which teachers identified a particular option, even if mentioned by only one or two teachers as in the case of management skills, post-graduate courses, and integrated curriculum. These data reflect the kinds of professional development activities that teachers wanted more of in future. Most teachers' emphasized that their professional learning activities must be squeezed into very tight schedules and around other pressing time commitments.

TABLE 1:
TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL LEARNING INTERESTS

MV	TP	NR	SH	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY
X	X	X	X	hands-on, practical, immediate, relevant to subject specialization
X	X	X	X	conflict resolution
X	X	X	X	computer literacy
X	X	X	X	interaction with colleagues within their school and/or in other schools
X	X		X	working with the community
X			X	building school community
	X		X	portfolio assessment
X	X			student learning, behaviour, discipline
	X		X	understanding change process
	X		X	school-university partnership
			X	working in teams
			X	working on whole school initiatives
			X	working with parents
			X	integrated curriculum
			X	developing cross-department units
		X		conferences (subject-specific)
	X			management skills
		X		post-graduate courses
			X	time for individual reflection

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Some interesting patterns emerge. Teachers across all four schools consistently identified hands-on, subject-specific, practical inservice as most significant for them - especially in areas of conflict resolution, computer literacy and interaction with colleagues.

The strong interest in computer literacy is not surprising, given the infusion, proliferation and influence of technology in education. Teachers are feeling pressure to learn new skills for using computers effectively in their communications, student assessment, grading and reporting as well as integrating the technology into their subject specialties and teaching practice. The implementation of computers in schools is an important reason for and facilitator of teacher collaboration - such as mentoring relationships. Teachers in our study comprise an older cohort in their mid to late 40s who went through school before the computer revolution of the last 20 years hit in full force. Given this set of circumstances, computer technology provides an excellent opportunity for continuous, life-long professional learning which can be closely integrated with teachers' specific disciplines and learning contexts.

Conflict resolution was another high priority, particularly in Mountain View where teachers felt under strain with regard to pupils' alienation from academics, emotional needs, and anti-social behaviour toward one another. However, conflict resolution was also mentioned by some staff across the other three schools, suggesting complex factors at play. Tensions arise out of changing social conditions. Some teachers in Stewart Heights and North Ridge alluded to their feelings of anxiety and uncertainty in having to deal with more a more culturally diverse student body than they had experienced for most of their careers. Other teachers felt that their work was becoming more difficult because they are being asked to play more roles in the lives of their students.

Although teachers in Stewart Heights were more likely to mention specific types of collaboration such as teaming and partnerships, staff in all four schools wanted more opportunities for interaction with colleagues within their school and in other schools. What these data suggest is that teachers were not able to collaborate with their peers as much as they would like and they felt isolated from their communities. Some responses in this frame were suggestive of the role of administrators in the professional development process. In this regard, our analyses of the "leadership frame" data provide evidence of administrators' influence in shaping school culture and

professional development priorities. For example, North Ridge was the most rigidly bureaucratic among the four schools. The male principal took a formal approach to management and communication with staff. The principal in Stewart Heights was particularly oriented to staff dialogue, teamwork and student involvement. While staff in North Ridge were interested in more interactive professional development, as were their counterparts at other sites, they did not identify other types of interactive arrangements such as more teamwork, parent collaboration, building school community, integrating curriculum, working on whole school initiatives, developing cross-department units, or school-university partnerships. In short, teachers in North Ridge seemed more oriented to individual modes of professional learning while responses from Stewart Heights staff suggested goals that were more balanced between individual and collaborative learning. Talisman Park and Mountain View fell somewhere in between.[6]

Two modalities of teachers' professional growth are suggested in Table I: individual and collaborative. Teachers' individual learning interests across school sites varied to include portfolios, reflection, conferences, management skills, understanding the change process, and post-graduate courses. However, one of the most pronounced themes is teachers' perceived lack of opportunity for professional interaction with colleagues. Data in this frame also suggest that the particular school context accounted, in part, for teachers' formulations of their professional development needs. For example, Mountain View (vocational) is fundamentally different in its mandate, curriculum, and student body than the other three schools (academic). Staff in this school faced unique challenges. Conflict resolution, interaction with colleagues, and strategies for managing student behaviour were learning priorities consistent with their particular context.

The amount of time available for professional development is an obvious issue, but of equal concern for teachers was how time was used and who had control over it. Teachers wanted more opportunities for informal collaborative interactions with colleagues that were self-initiated and that related directly to their classroom experience (Thiessen, 1992). School administrators were reported to be supportive and encouraging. Still, teachers relied on their own initiative to take advantage of

[6] Such patterns are more fully explored in another paper which considers the role of administrative leadership in school professional culture. Leadership accounts for analytically interesting differences and commonalities across school contexts.

what was available and to create informal networks of peer support. Most teachers were impatient whenever development activities were imposed in contrived, artificial ways, such as add-ons to staff meetings at the end of the day. Yet, there is no evidence that teachers automatically ruled out the value of "outside experts" or rejected a meaningful, even directive, role on the part of administration. They didn't discount any particular professional learning topic or format if they could perceive ways to apply it to their most pressing concerns, dilemmas and priorities. This is a particularly strong theme in our findings. Regardless of the specific form of professional learning, teachers sought meaningful connections between abstract theory and their immediate practice. Divorced from the everyday realities of their work with students and colleagues, professional learning became a sterile intellectual exercise.

Professional Development Committees (PDCs) provided some degree of autonomy and freedom from bureaucratic dictates. Such structures are consistent with the concept of "professional bureaucracy" (Mintzberg, 1989) mentioned earlier in my analysis of North Ridge responses. PDCs were a logical extension of teachers' autonomous professionalism. For the most part, teachers seemed comfortable within their department cultures and the collegial nurturing that they provided. Teachers in non-core subject areas (music, family studies) or in non-classroom roles (counsellors, librarians), however, seemed less satisfied with the institutional status quo and slightly more open to collaborative structures, such as inter-disciplinary work, team teaching and classroom visits. With notable exceptions at the grade nine level, (de-streaming, curriculum integration, and block scheduling), it was mostly, but not exclusively, at the department level where professional collaboration took place. The evidence suggests that opportunities, inducements, resources, and time for professional discourse around teaching and learning across the school are diminishing.

Process Issues

Table 2 indicates that the predominant pattern across the four schools was casual, intermittent and episodic contacts, especially between colleagues in different departments.

TABLE 2

PROFESSIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING FRAME
CROSS CASE SUMMARY

SCHOOL	SIMILAR	DIFFERENT	SURPRISES
Stewart Hts. S. S.	– professional development very important to teachers – PD is mostly individualistic, often fragmented and largely disconnected from theory and wider world – daily stress and time pressures make it almost impossible – teachers perceive lack of opportunity for professional interaction with colleagues	– professional development goals were balanced between individual and collaborative learning	
Talisman Park S. S.	– professional development very important to teachers – PD is mostly individualistic, often fragmented and largely disconnected from theory and wider world – daily stress and time pressures make it almost impossible – teachers perceive lack of opportunity for professional interaction with colleagues	– professional development goals were predominantly individual – exception was grade 9 transitions	– how challenging it is for a committed principal to move staff towards more school based interactive modes of learning
Northridge S. S.	– professional development very important to teachers – PD is mostly individualistic, often fragmented and largely disconnected from theory and wider world – daily stress and time pressures make it almost impossible – teachers perceive lack of opportunity for professional interaction with colleagues	– professional development goals were predominantly individual	– role that an innovative teacher leader can play in designing and encouraging more interactive types of processional learning
Mountain View S. S.	– professional development very important to teachers – PD is mostly individualistic, often fragmented and largely disconnected from theory and wider world – daily stress and time pressures make it almost impossible – teachers perceive lack of opportunity for professional interaction with colleagues	– limited school based professional development	– impact of demands re. discipline had preparedness to seek advice from colleagues

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One of the most interesting findings is what teachers didn't say in relation to authoritative models of school change and professional learning proposed in the literature. For example, teachers in our study made little or no mention of professional development focusing on relationships with parents, especially as partners (Sanders & Epstein, 1998; Epstein, 1997). Skills in adapting teaching practice and communication in line with the needs of diverse students and families were not identified as a specific priority (Ryan, 1999) – although demographic change is impacting on all project schools. Teachers did not describe their aspirations for professional development in terms of cross-disciplinary or integrated curricular initiatives (Hargreaves & Moore, forthcoming). Yet, teachers were consistent in wanting more opportunities for interaction with colleagues and their desire to get at the practical issues of teaching within their school and a couple of teachers indicated that they would like to visits other schools, observe in others' classrooms as a means of expanding their understanding, enhancing their strategic repertoires and promoting professional networking (Ontario Teachers Federation, 1992). Action research and inquiry models were not identified as viable forms of professional learning (Shaw, 1997; Cook, 1998). Training in new assessment, reporting and evaluation methods was noted but mostly in relation to portfolios (Earl & LeMahieu, 1997). Exchanges with business and industry were barely mentioned, despite the fact that most teachers seemed dedicated to preparing their students for the world they will enter. With the exception of conflict resolution and management skills, nothing was said directly about the need for teamwork or group dynamics training as important processes in professional learning (Maehr & Midgley, 1996). In all four schools, with some exceptions around the grade nine program, there appeared to be a profound lack of curriculum design that would bring teachers together beyond their customary assumptions and areas of expertise to discuss novel or collective approaches to curriculum problems and opportunities in ways that create real dialogue about teaching and learning. In summary, the cross-case analysis indicates that the essential three conditions for successful learning organizations that Senge (1996) identifies - guiding ideas and shared purpose; infrastructure for learning; and domains for taking action - were largely absent in the project schools.

Conclusion

The pattern is clear across all of our project schools – teachers 'craft' knowledge, concerning their students' learning and their own classroom practice, is an underrated and underused resource for teachers' professional learning and building school capacity for change. Clearly, teachers valued professional development that was directly relevant to their practice. However, they tended to look to 'experts' outside their workplace to fill this need, often with disappointing results. Teachers keep returning to this model because, historically, professional development has been grounded in the assumption that experts have the knowledge that is passed along to teachers who are expected to apply it effectively in their classrooms and schools, with little if any follow-up. This transmission model, paradoxically, is inadequate to meet the professional development priorities and processes that teachers said that they preferred. Ironically, although teachers displayed a yearning for more practicality, even collaborative activities, in their professional development, they did not perceive themselves as 'experts', nor did they conceive of their schools and classrooms as 'laboratories' for their own as well as their students' learning.

Educators have a tenacious belief in the transmission model of professional development. Yet, our data suggest, as have other studies such as Fullan's classic analysis in 1991, that this approach is incongruent with adult learning principles and antithetical to building the conditions of shared purpose, infrastructure and domains for action that enable schools to become effective learning organizations (Senge, 1996). What's needed is for teachers to be able to reconceptualize their professional learning so that their own practical knowledge and understanding become the *entry points* for their inquiry, dialogue, and reflection (Brown & Duguid, 1996). This model, in contrast to an individualized one, is process oriented, emphasizing collaborative, collegial and interactive approaches to learning. It begins with teachers' practice, rather than theory or innovation. It focuses on the 'teacher as inquirer' who retains authority of and ownership over his or her own learning so that it remains directly connected to and relevant within the classroom. In this way, teachers remain in control of the professional development agenda since it emanates from and is informed by their own professional experience. As such, this model of professional learning demands a new form of collaborative dialogue in schools that begins with teachers' practical

expertise and experience upon which their inquiry and collective reflection can move to deeper levels of teaching and learning. From this perspective, teachers' practice informs theory, policy and innovation, not the other way around.

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